



Easley Bridge At Rowe Valley

Easley Bridge Recalls Early History Of Area

1-26-77

By ROBIN STRINGFELLOW
Staff Writer

Though Rowe Valley's well-known Easley Bridge may be considered somewhat obsolete by many of the motorists it supports daily due to years of weather and weight, this turn-of-the-century iron-work expansion over the San Gabriel River would probably bring a higher price for its historical significance than the more modern structures of today.

Erected in 1909, Easley Bridge bears the name of one of the area's founding families noted to have settled in the area between Circleville and Water Valley (Jonah) in 1853. At the same time, the David McCurdy Sloan family brought 40 slaves from South Carolina by wagon train. Though the swift waters of the San Gabriel separated the two families, the Easleys' to the north and the Sloans' to the south, a low water crossing bridged the gap and cleared the

way for the marital union of David McCurdy Sloan and Mary Elizabeth Easley as well as two other betrothals between Sam and Robert Easley and Sloan girls. Descendants occupied the two family farms for more than a century later, the Easley home still in excellent condition today with most of the original furnishings. A veritable museum, the current home of Claire Easley Mashburn and family still contains many handmade pieces, early period tools and implements. Inheriting her ancestors' flair for educational organization, Mrs. Mashburn maintains a position on the Georgetown I.S.D. board of trustees perpetuating the memory of the Easley rural school on the family farm known to be in operation by 1892.

"All my nightmares center around that old bridge," she says sounding somewhat

frightened of the structure's dilapidated condition. "It goes rickety, rickety, rickety," she describes adding that she would like to see the bridge preserved and re-conditioned rather than replaced.

For 70-year-old Mame Sloan Steadman of Taylor, the Easley Bridge rings a different tune. "It goes cricklety, cracklety, cricklety when you cross it." An avid promoter of Taylor's Moody Museum and resident on the family-named Sloan Street, Mrs. Steadman recalls many family picnics and camping weekends near the bridge in Rowe Valley. "Daddy used to ride to town on horseback when the streets were unpaved," she continues adding that the family made many a horse and buggy visit across the river to visit the Easleys.

"We really had a wild time down there," describes Mrs. Steadman admitting to a little turkey rustling on occasion. "We used to go real slow and grab the turkeys that used to roost on the bridge. Of course, my daddy would have whipped me if he had known." The cool waters of the San Gabriel also served as a swimming pool for the two families, and according to Mrs. Steadman, David McCurdy Sloan broke the ice to take a bath in the winter.

Though completely washed from its piers in the 1921 flood, Easley Bridge made a come back during the Depression around 1930. Workers reinstated the original structure raising it some four feet to prevent future such damage and it has endured into the 1970s.

Rowe Valley owner Lee Rowe claims to have witnessed an occasional 20,000 pound truck crossing the old bridge in recent years even though the load limit has been reduced to 5,000 pounds. The sign warns "weak bridge ahead," but the strength and endurance of Easley Bridge is as strong as the memory of two of Williamson County's founding families, probably destined to remain with us for generations to come in one form or another.